

# LIVING HISTORY AMERICA

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES  
IN DOCUMENTS, ESSAYS, LETTERS,  
SONGS AND POEMS

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support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose power he feels most persuasive to righteousness; and is withdrawing from the ministry those temporary rewards, which proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labors for the instruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry; that therefore the proscribing of any citizen as unworthy of public confidence by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which, in common with his fellow citizens, he has a natural right; that it tends also to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing, with a monopoly of worldly honors and emoluments, those who will externally profess and conform to it; that though indeed these are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way; that the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction; that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession of propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty, because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his

and approve or disapprove only as they see fit; that is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error,

and has nothing to fear from conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.

We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

And though we well know that this assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding Assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.

### "There are important defects in the system"

#### THE ANNAPOLIS CONVENTION

Squabbling states, restive farmers and a deteriorating order marked the United States in the 1780s. United in their desire to leave the British Empire, the newborn states simply could not get along after their common enemy left the scene. Inflation ran rampant, the economy was collapsing, former soldiers were unpaid for their services, and the weakness of the federal

government were just some of the problems that confronted the nation.

Concerned by the failings of the new nation, Virginia issued an invitation to all states to meet and discuss ways to repair the situation. Although nine accepted, only five (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia) attended the September 1786 gathering in Annapolis, Maryland. Determined to confront the issues by forming a stronger federal government, the convention approved a resolution written by Alexander Hamilton stating the need to reconstitute the federal government and issuing an invitation to attend a convention in May 1787 in Philadelphia. Unanimously approved, the Annapolis Convention set the stage from which to build a new constitution.

To the Honorable, the legislatures of Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, the commissioners from the said states, respectively assembled at Annapolis, humbly beg leave to report:

That, pursuant to their several appointments, they met at Annapolis in the state of Maryland on the 11th day of September instant, and having proceeded to a communication of their powers, they found that the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia had, in substance and nearly in the same terms, authorized their respective commissioners to meet such other commissioners as were, or might be, appointed by the other states in the Union, at such time and place as should be agreed upon by the said commissioners, to take in to consideration the trade and commerce of the United States, to consider how far a uniform system in their commercial intercourse and regulations might be necessary to their common interest and permanent harmony, and to report to the several states such an act, relative to this great object, as when unanimously ratified by them would enable the United States in Congress assembled effectually to provide for the same....

Deeply impressed, however, with the magnitude and importance of the object confided to them on this occasion, your commissioners cannot forbear to indulge an expression of their

earnest and unanimous wish that speedy measures be taken to effect a general meeting of the states in a future convention, for the same and such other purposes as the situation of public affairs may be found to require.

If, in expressing this wish, or in intimating any other sentiment, your commissioners should seem to exceed the strict bounds of their appointment, they entertain a full confidence that a conduct, dictated by an anxiety for the welfare of the United States, will not fail to receive an indulgent construction.

In this persuasion, your commissioners submit an opinion that the idea of extending the powers of their deputies to other objects than those of commerce, which has been adopted by the state of New Jersey, was an improvement on the original plan, and will deserve to be incorporated into that of a future convention. They are the more naturally led to this conclusion as in the course of their reflections on the subject they have been induced to think that the power of regulating trade is of such comprehensive extent, and will enter so far into the general system of the federal government, that to give it efficacy and to obviate questions and doubts concerning its precise nature and limits may require a correspondent adjustment of other parts of the federal system.

That there are important defects in the system of the federal government is acknowledged by the acts of all those states which have concurred in the present meeting; that the defects, upon a closer examination, may be found greater and more numerous than even these acts imply is at least so far probably, from the embarrassments which characterize the present state of our national affairs, foreign and domestic, as may reasonably be supposed to merit a deliberate and candid discussion, in some mode, which will unite the sentiments and councils of all the states. In the choice of the mode, your commissioners are of opinion that a convention of deputies from the different states, for the special and sole purpose of entering into this investigation and digesting a plan for supplying



such defects as may be discovered to exist, will be entitled to a preference from considerations which will occur without being particularized.

Your commissioners decline an enumeration of those national circumstances on which their opinion respecting the propriety of a future convention, with more enlarged powers, is founded; as it would be a useless intrusion of facts and observations, most of which have been frequently the subject of public discussion, and none of which can have escaped the penetration of those to whom they would in this instance be addressed. They are, however, of a nature so serious as, in the view of your commissioners, to render the situation of the United States delicate and critical, calling for an exertion of the united virtue and wisdom of all the members of the Confederacy.

Under this impression, your commissioners, with the most respectful deference, beg leave to suggest their unanimous conviction that it may essentially tend to advance the interests of the Union if the states, by whom they have been respectively delegated, would themselves concur and use their endeavors to procure the concurrence of the other states in the appointment of commissioners, to meet at Philadelphia on the second Monday in May next, to take into consideration the situation of the United States, to devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the Constitution of the federal government adequate to the exigencies of purpose to the United States in Congress assembled, as when agreed to by them, and afterward confirmed by the legislatures of every state, will effectually provide for the same.

Though your commissioners could not with propriety address these observations and sentiments to any but the states they have the honor to represent, they have nevertheless concluded from motives of respect to transmit copies of this report to the United States Congress assembled, and to the executives of the other states.

## "The late rising of the people"

### SHAYS' REBELLION

In western Massachusetts, economic depression, corruption and a wave of farm foreclosures for non-payment of taxes sparked Shays' Rebellion. Thousands of farmers and former soldiers (Shays was an officer in the American Revolution) rebelled against the Massachusetts government. Here, one of the leaders of the rebellion, Daniel Gray, outlines the reasons for the revolt to an audience in Hampshire County.

A state militia put down the rebellion, but within two years all participants had been pardoned and most of the complaints resolved. Shays' Rebellion heightened national concern about the rapid deterioration of the fledgling country and helped create a renewed sense of urgency to revamp the central government.

Gentlemen,

We have thought proper to inform you of some of the principal causes of the late risings of the people, and also of their present movement, viz.

1st. The present expensive mode of collecting debts, which by reason of the great scarcity of cash, will of necessity fill our goals with unhappy debtors; and thereby a reputable body of people rendered incapable of being serviceable either to themselves or the community.

2nd. The monies raised by impost and excise being appropriated to discharge the interest of governmental securities, and not the foreign debt, when these securities are not subject to taxation.

3rd. A suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus, by which those persons who have stepped forth to assert and maintain the rights of the people, are liable to be taken and conveyed even to the most distant part of the Commonwealth, and thereby subjected to an unjust punishment.

4th. The unlimited power granted to Justices of the Peace and Sheriffs, Deputy

Sheriffs, and Constables, by the Riot Act, indemnifying them to prosecution thereof; when perhaps, wholly actuated from a principle of revenge, hatred, and envy.

Furthermore, Be assured, that this body, now at arms, despise the idea of being instigated by British emissaries, which is so strenuously propagated by the enemies of our liberties: And also wish the most proper and speedy measures may be taken, to discharge both our foreign and domestic debt.

Per Order,

Daniel Gray, Chairman of the Committee

## The Northwest Ordinance

### CONGRESS

The Confederation Congress passed in 1787 the Northwest Ordinance setting the terms for the federal territory northwest of the Ohio River. Individual states had handed over their claims for the largely unsettled land to the United States government. The Northwest Ordinance imposed federal authority in the territory and set forth the terms for the creation of new states (there would be five and part of a sixth) in it. The act, which was the most important legislation approved by the Confederate Congress, provided an orderly procedure for the conveyance of land into the public domain the acceptance of new states into the republic. It banned slavery in the territory, pledged to honor the rights of Native Americans, and encouraged "religion, morality and knowledge." The Northwest Ordinance was the first piece of federal legislation guaranteeing freedom of religion, speech, and press, and determined that a territory can become eligible for statehood when it has 60,000 adult males.

BE IT ORDAINED by the United States in Congress assembled, That the said territory, for the purposes of temporary government, be one district, subject, however, to be divided into two districts, as future circumstances may, in the opinion of Congress, make it expedient...

Be it ordained by the authority aforesaid, That there shall be appointed from time to time by Congress, a governor, whose commission shall continue in force for the term of three years, unless sooner revoked by Congress; he shall reside in the district, and have a freehold estate therein in 1,000 acres of land, while in the exercise of his office.

There shall be appointed from time to time by Congress, a secretary, whose commission shall continue in force for four years unless sooner revoked; he shall reside in the district, and have a freehold estate therein in 500 acres of land, while in the exercise of his office. It shall be his duty to keep and preserve the acts and laws passed by the legislature, and the public records of the district, and the proceedings of the governor in his executive department, and transmit authentic copies of such acts and proceedings, every six months, to the Secretary of Congress: There shall also be appointed a court to consist of three judges, any two of whom to form a court, who shall have a common law jurisdiction, and reside in the district, and have each therein a freehold estate in 500 acres of land while in the exercise of their offices, and their commissions shall continue in force during good behavior.

The governor and judges, or a majority of them, shall adopt and publish in the district such laws of the original States, criminal and civil, as may be necessary and best suited to the circumstances of the district, and report them to Congress from time to time: which laws shall be in force in the district until the organization of the General Assembly therein, unless disapproved of by Congress; but afterwards the Legislature shall have authority to alter them as they shall think fit.

The governor, for the time being, shall be commander-in-chief of the militia, appoint and commission all officers in the same below the rank of general officers; all general officers shall be appointed and commissioned by Congress.

Previous to the organization of the general assembly, the governor shall appoint such



magistrates and other civil officers in each county or township, as he shall find necessary for the preservation of the peace and good order in the same: After the general assembly shall be organized, the powers and duties of the magistrates and other civil officers shall be regulated and defined by the said assembly; but all magistrates and other civil officers not herein otherwise directed, shall, during the continuance of this temporary government, be appointed by the governor.

For the prevention of crimes and injuries, the laws to be adopted or made shall have force in all parts of the district, and for the execution of process, criminal and civil, the governor shall make proper divisions thereof; and he shall proceed from time to time as circumstances may require, to lay out the parts of the district in which the Indian titles shall have been extinguished, into counties and townships, subject however to such alterations as may thereafter be made by the legislature.

So soon as there shall be five thousand free male inhabitants of full age in the district, upon giving **proof** thereof to the governor, they shall receive **authority**, with time and place, to elect representatives from their counties or townships to represent them in the general assembly: Provided, That, for every five hundred free male inhabitants, there shall be one representative, and so on progressively with the number of free male inhabitants shall the right of representation increase, until the number of representatives shall amount to twenty-five; after which, the number and proportion of representatives shall be regulated by the legislature: Provided, That no person be eligible or qualified to act as a representative unless he shall have been a citizen of one of the United States three years, and be a resident in the district, or unless he shall have resided in the district three years; and, in either case, shall likewise hold in his own right, in fee simple, two hundred acres of land within the same: Provided, also, That a freehold in fifty acres of land in the district, having been a citizen of one of the states, and being resident in

the district, or the like freehold and two years residence in the district, shall be necessary to qualify a man as an elector of a representative.

The representatives thus elected, shall serve for the term of two years; and, in case of the death of a representative, or removal from office, the governor shall issue a writ to the county or township for which he was a member, to elect another in his stead, to serve for the residue of the term.

The general assembly or legislature shall consist of the governor, legislative council, and a house of representatives. The Legislative Council shall consist of five members, to continue in office five years, unless sooner removed by Congress; any three of whom to be a quorum; and the members of the Council shall be nominated and appointed in the following manner, to wit: As soon as representatives shall be elected, the Governor shall appoint a time and place for them to meet together; and, when met, they shall nominate ten persons, residents in the district, and each possessed of a freehold in five hundred acres of land, and return their names to Congress; five of whom Congress shall appoint and commission to serve as aforesaid; and, whenever a vacancy shall happen in the council, by death or removal from office, the house of representatives shall nominate two persons, qualified as aforesaid, for each vacancy, and return their names to Congress; one of whom Congress shall appoint and commission for the residue of the term. And every five years, four months at least before the expiration of the time of service of the members of council, the said house shall nominate ten persons, qualified as aforesaid, and return their names to Congress; five of whom Congress shall appoint and commission to serve as members of the council five years, unless sooner removed. And the governor, legislative council, and house of representatives, shall have authority to make laws in all cases, for the good government of the district, not repugnant to the principles and articles in this ordinance established and declared. And all bills, having passed by a majority in the house, and by a majority in

the council, shall be referred to the governor for his assent; but no bill, or legislative act whatever, shall be of any force without his assent. The governor shall have power to convene, prorogue, and dissolve the general assembly, when, in his opinion, it shall be expedient.

The governor, judges, legislative council, secretary, and such other officers as Congress shall appoint in the district, shall take an oath or affirmation of fidelity and of office; the governor before the president of congress, and all other officers before the Governor. As soon as a legislature shall be formed in the district, the council and house assembled in one room, shall have authority, by joint ballot, to elect a delegate to Congress, who shall have a seat in Congress, with a right of debating but not of voting during this temporary government.

And, for extending the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty, which form the basis whereon these republics, their laws and constitutions are erected; to fix and establish those principles as the basis of all laws, constitutions, and governments, which forever hereafter shall be formed in the said territory: to provide also for the establishment of States, and permanent government therein, and for their admission to a share in the federal councils on an equal footing with the original States, at as early periods as may be consistent with the general interest:

It is hereby ordained and declared by the authority aforesaid, That the following articles shall be considered as articles of compact between the original States and the people and States in the said territory and forever remain unalterable, unless by common consent, to wit:

ART. 1. No person, demeaning himself in a peaceable and orderly manner, shall ever be molested on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments, in the said territory.

ART. 2. The inhabitants of the said territory shall always be entitled to the benefits of the writ of habeas corpus, and of the trial by jury; of a proportionate representation of the people in the legislature; and of judicial proceedings

according to the course of the common law. All persons shall be bailable, unless for capital offences, where the proof shall be evident or the presumption great. All fines shall be moderate; and no cruel or unusual punishments shall be inflicted. No man shall be deprived of his liberty or property, but by the judgment of his peers or the law of the land; and, should the public exigencies make it necessary, for the common preservation, to take any person's property, or to demand his particular services, full compensation shall be made for the same. And, in the just preservation of rights and property, it is understood and declared, that no law ought ever to be made, or have force ill the said territory, that shall, in any manner whatever, interfere with or affect private contracts or engagements, bona fide, and without fraud, previously formed.

ART. 3. Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged. The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity, shall from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them.

ART. 4. The said territory, and the States which may be formed therein, shall forever remain a part of this Confederacy of the United States of America, subject to the Articles of Confederation, and to such alterations therein as shall be constitutionally made; and to all the acts and ordinances of the United States in Congress assembled, conformable thereto. The inhabitants and settlers in the said territory shall be subject to pay a part of the federal debts contracted or to be contracted, and a proportional part of the expenses of government, to be apportioned on them by Congress according to the same common rule and measure by



which apportionments thereof shall be made on the other States; and the taxes for paying their proportion shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the legislatures of the district or districts, or new States, as in the original States, within the time agreed upon by the United States in Congress assembled. The legislatures of those districts or new States, shall never interfere with the primary disposal of the soil by the United States in Congress assembled, nor with any regulations Congress may find necessary for securing the title in such soil to the bona fide purchasers. No tax shall be imposed on lands the property of the United States; and, in no case, shall non-resident proprietors be taxed higher than residents. The navigable waters leading into the Mississippi and St. Lawrence, and the carrying places between the same, shall be common highways and forever free, as well to the inhabitants of the said territory as to the citizens of the United States, and those of any other States that may be admitted into the confederacy, without any tax, impost, or duty therefore.

ART. 5. There shall be formed in the said territory, not less than three nor more than five States; and the boundaries of the States, as soon as Virginia shall alter her act of cession, and consent to the same, shall become fixed and established as follows, to wit: The western State in the said territory, shall be bounded by the Mississippi, the Ohio, and Wabash Rivers; a direct line drawn from the Wabash and Post Vincents, due North, to the territorial line between the United States and Canada; and, by the said territorial line, to the Lake of the Woods and Mississippi. The middle State shall be bounded by the said direct line, the Wabash from Post Vincents to the Ohio, by the Ohio, by a direct line, drawn due north from the mouth of the Great Miami, to the said territorial line, and by the said territorial line. The eastern State shall be bounded by the last mentioned direct line, the Ohio, Pennsylvania, and the said territorial line: Provided, however, and it is further understood and declared, that the

boundaries of these three States shall be subject so far to be altered, that, if Congress shall hereafter find it expedient, they shall have authority to form one or two States in that part of the said territory which lies north of an east and west line drawn through the southerly bend or extreme of lake Michigan. And, whenever any of the said States shall have sixty thousand free inhabitants therein, such State shall be admitted, by its delegates, into the Congress of the United States, on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever, and shall be at liberty to form a permanent constitution and State government: Provided, the constitution and government so to be formed, shall be republican, and in conformity to the principles contained in these articles; and, so far as it can be consistent with the general interest of the confederacy, such admission shall be allowed at an earlier period, and when there may be a less number of free inhabitants in the State than sixty thousand.

ART. 6. There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: Provided, always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.

Be it ordained by the authority aforesaid, That the resolutions of the 3rd of April 1784, relative to the subject of this ordinance, be, and the same are hereby repealed and declared null and void.

## "We the People"

### THE CONSTITUTION

In May 1787, forty-two delegates from twelve states (Rhode Island refused to participate) converged in Philadelphia to try to hammer out a constitution for a new, stronger federal government. For four months in sweltering heat and

through impassioned debates, the many and diverse perspectives of the delegates clashed and sought compromise to find common ground to achieve the common goal of preserving the nation. States' rights, slavery, the authority of an executive, concerns about small states being dominated by large states, westward expansion, liberty, and many other issues were all touched upon and addressed in the final document.

Some of the leading figures of the Revolution, including George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, participated, as well as the leading young political thinkers James Madison, James Wilson, and Alexander Hamilton. The convention was held in secret, with sentries at the door. Washington—who would later call the gathering a "miracle"—was unanimously selected as president of the convention.

In the end, not every delegate was satisfied nor every issue fully resolved, but a document that delegates from all twelve states could support was completed and put forward to the nation for approval. On March 4, 1789, the day which had been fixed for starting operations of a national government under the new Constitution, eleven states had ratified the Constitution. North Carolina ratified it in November 1789 and Rhode Island in May 1790. In 1791, responding to widespread concerns that provisions protecting individual liberties be included, Congress added the Bill of Rights. Although many people expected the Constitution to be a temporary fix for the struggling country, it has withstood the test of time and provided the foundation for American government for more than two centuries and served as a model for countries across the globe.

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

#### Article. I.

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section. 2. The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Section. 3. The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.



Done in Convention by the Unanimous consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day September in the Year of our Lord one thousand ven hundred and Eighty seven and of the independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

George Washington, President and deputy from Virginia

New Hampshire  
John Langdon  
Nicholas Gilman  
Massachusetts  
Nathaniel Gorham  
Rufus King  
Connecticut  
William Samuel Johnson  
Roger Sherman  
New York  
Alexander Hamilton  
New Jersey  
William Livingston  
David Brearley  
William Paterson  
Jonathan Dayton  
Pennsylvania  
Benjamin Franklin  
Thomas Mifflin  
Robert Morris  
George Clymer  
Thomas FitzSimons  
Jared Ingersoll  
James Wilson  
Gouverneur Morris  
Delaware  
George Read  
Gunning Bedford Jun  
John Dickinson  
Richard Bassett  
Jacob Broom  
Maryland  
James McHenry  
Dan of St. Thomas Jenifer  
Daniel Carroll  
Virginia  
John Blair

James Madison Jr.  
North Carolina  
William Blount  
Richard Dobbs Spaight  
Hu Williamson  
South Carolina  
J. Rutledge  
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney  
Charles Pinckney  
Pierce Butler  
Georgia  
William Few  
Abraham Baldwin  
Attest  
William Jackson, Secretary

## Address in Favor of the Constitution

### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

By 1787, Benjamin Franklin was considered the wisest man in America. Franklin, 82, had been dispensing wisdom as "Poor Richard" for decades. He had discovered and captured lightning. Franklin was one of the first to call for national union. He had convinced France to come to the aid of America in the Revolution, and he negotiated the Treaty of Paris forcing England to recognize American sovereignty. Aside from George Washington, nobody commanded the same respect.

He participated throughout the Constitutional Convention, though he was twenty years older than the next oldest delegate, and more than twice as old as most of the delegates. Many of Franklin's pet ideas—a unicameral legislature and unpaid officers—were rejected and he was on the losing side of several issues. Nevertheless, Franklin supported the Constitution. Upon the conclusion of the convention on September 17, he rose to speak in favor of the document. His speech embodied the spirit of compromise and conciliation that he saw was necessary to forge a democratic nation. The speech was widely circulated throughout America and very influential in swaying public

opinion in favor of the Constitution. His articulation of the spirit of compromise marked an indispensable feature of American government.

Mr. President, I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present, but Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being oblig'd, by better Information or fuller Consideration, to change Opinions even on important Subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. It is therefore that the older I grow the more apt I am to doubt my own Judgment, and to pay more Respect to the Judgment of others. Most Men indeed, as well as most Sects in Religion, think themselves in Possession of all Truth, and that wherever others differ from them it is far Error. Steele, a Protestant in a Dedication, tells the Pope, that the only Difference between our two Churches, in their Opinions of the Certainty of their Doctrine, is, the Romish Church is infallible, and the Church of England is never in the Wrong. But tho' many private Persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility, as of that of their Sect, few express it so naturally as a certain French Lady, who, in a little Dispute with her Sister, said, I don't know how it happens, Sister, but I meet with nobody but myself that's always in the right. Il n'y a que moi qui a toujours raison.

In these Sentiments, Sir, I agree to this Constitution, with all its Faults, if they are such; because I think a General Government necessary for us, and there is no Form of Government but what may be a Blessing to the People if well administered; and I believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a Course of Years, and can only end in Despotism as other Forms have done before it when the People shall become so corrupted as to need Despotic Government, being incapable of any other. I doubt too whether any other Convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution: For when you assemble a Number of Men to have the Advantage of their joint

Wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those Men all their Prejudices, their Passions, their Errors of Opinion, their local Interests, and their selfish Views. From such an Assembly can a perfect Production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this System approaching so near to Perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our Enemies, who are waiting with Confidence to hear that our Councils are confounded, like those of the Builders of Babel, and that our States are on the Point of Separation, only to meet hereafter for the Purpose of cutting one another's Throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am sure that it is not the best. The Opinions I have had of its Errors, I sacrifice to the Public Good. I have never whisper'd a Syllable of them abroad. Within these Walls they were born, and here they shall die. If every one of us in returning to our Constituents were to report the Objections he has had to it, and use his Influence to gain partizans in support of them, we might prevent its being generally received, and thereby lose all the salutary Effects and great Advantages resulting naturally in our favor among foreign Nations, as well as among ourselves, from our real or apparent Unanimity. Much of the Strength and Efficiency of any Government, in procuring and securing Happiness to the People, depends on Opinion, on the general Opinion of the Goodness of that Government as well as of the Wisdom and Integrity of its Governors. I hope therefore that for our own Sakes, as a part of the People, and for the sake of our Posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution, wherever our Influence may extend, and turn our future Thoughts and Endeavours to the Means of having it well administered.

On the whole, Sir, I cannot help expressing a Wish, that every Member of the Convention, who may still have Objections to it, would with me on this Occasion doubt a little of his own Infallibility, and to make manifest our Unanimity, put his Name to this Instrument.



## "The tree of liberty must be refreshed"

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Not everyone agreed with Franklin's perspective. The publication of the proposed Constitution came as a surprise to many who were not even aware that a completely new form of government was in the works. Initial reactions were mixed. Thomas Jefferson, who was in Paris at the time of the convention, had decidedly mixed views of the Constitution. In this November 13, 1787, letter to William Stephens Smith he expresses his reaction and questions the need for a new Constitution.

Dear Sir,

...I do not know whether it is to yourself or Mr. Adams I am to give my thanks for the copy of the new constitution. I beg leave through you to place them where due. It will be yet three weeks before I shall receive them from America. There are very good articles in it: and very bad. I do not know which preponderate. What we have lately read in the history of Holland, in the chapter on Stadholder, would have sufficed to set me against a Chief magistrate eligible for a long duration, if I had ever been disposed towards one: and what we have always read of the elections of Polish kings should have forever excluded the idea of one continuable for life. Wonderful is the effect of impudent and persevering lying. The British ministry have so long hired their gazetteers to repeat and model into every form lies about our being in anarchy, that the world has at length believed them, the English nation has believed them, the ministers themselves have come to believe them, and what is more wonderful, we have believed them ourselves. Yet where does this anarchy exist? Where did it ever exist, except in the single instance of Massachusetts? And can history produce an instance of a rebellion so honourably conducted? I say nothing of its motives. They were founded in ignorance, not wickedness. God

forbid we should ever by 20 years without such a rebellion. The people can not be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. We have had 13 states independent 11 years. There has been one rebellion. That comes to one rebellion in a century and a half for each state. What country before ever existed a century and half without rebellion? And what country can preserve it's liberties if the rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is it's natural manure. Our Convention has been too much impressed by the insurrection of Massachusetts: and in the spur of the moment they are setting up a kite to keep the hen yard in order. I hope in god this article will be rectified before the new constitution is accepted.

## Debating the need for a Bill of Rights

JAMES WILSON AND JOHN SMILIE

One of the major points of contention in the debates over the Constitution was a Bill of Rights guaranteeing citizens certain liberties. Pennsylvania held a convention in November to consider ratifying the Constitution. Almost immediately, one of the major points of contention was the lack of a declaration of rights guaranteeing certain liberties to citizens, as this November 28, 1787, exchange between James Wilson, who signed the Constitution, and John Smilie shows. Pennsylvania ratified the Constitution on December 12, five days after Delaware was the first state to do so.

JAMES WILSON: Mr. President, we are repeatedly called upon to give some reason why a bill of rights has not been annexed to the proposed plan. I not only think that enquiry is at this time unnecessary and out of order, but I expect, at least, that those who desire us to shew why it was omitted, will furnish some arguments to shew that it ought to have been inserted; for the proof of the affirmative naturally falls upon them. But the truth is, Sir, that this circumstance, which has since occasioned so much clamour and debate, never struck the mind of any member in the late convention 'till, I believe, within three days of the dissolution of that body, and even then, of so little account was the idea, that it passed off in a short conversation, without introducing a formal debate, or assuming the shape of a motion. For, Sir, the attempt to have thrown into the national scale an instrument in order to evince that any power not mentioned in the constitution was reserved, would have been spurned as an insult to the common understanding of mankind. In civil government it is certain, that bills of right are unnecessary and useless, not can I conceive whence the contrary notion has arisen. Virginia has no bill of rights, and will it be said that her constitution was less free?

JOHN SMILIE: I beg leave to observe, Mr. President, that although it has not been inserted in the printed volume of state constitutions, yet I have been assured by Mr. Mason, that Virginia has a bill of rights.

WILSON: I do not rely upon the information of Mr. Mason, or of any other gentleman on a question of this kind, but I refer to the authenticity of the volume which contains the state constitutions, and in that Virginia has no bill of rights. But, Sir, has South Carolina no security for her liberties? That state has no bill of rights. Are the citizens of the Eastern shore of Delaware more secured in their freedom, or more enlightened on the subject of government than the citizens of the western shore? New Jersey has no bill of rights; New York has none. Thus, Sir, it appears from the example of other

states, as well as from principle, that a bill of rights is neither an essential nor a necessary instrument in framing a system of government, since liberty may exist and be as well secured without it. But it was not only unnecessary, but on this occasion, it was found impracticable; for who will be bold enough to undertake to enumerate all the rights of the people? And when the attempt to enumerate them is made, it must be remembered that if the enumeration is not complete, every thing not expressly mentioned will be presumed to be purposefully omitted. So it must be with a bill of rights, and an omission in stating the powers granted to the government, is not so dangerous as an omission recapitulating the rights reserved by the people. We have already seen the origin of magna charta, and tracing the subject still further we find the petition of rights claiming the liberties of the people, according to the laws and statutes of the realm, of which the great charter was the most material; so that here again recourse is had to the old source from which their liberties are derived, the grant of the king. It was not 'till the revolution that the subject was placed upon a different footing, and even then the people did not claim their liberties as an inherent right, but as the result of an original contract between them and the sovereign. Thus, Mr. President, an attention to the situation of England, will shew that the conduct of that country in respect to bills of rights, cannot furnish an example to the inhabitants of the United States, who by the revolution have regained all their natural rights, and possess their liberty neither by grant nor contract. In short, Sir, I have said that a bill of rights would have been improperly annexed to the federal plan, and for this plain reason, that it would imply that whatever is not expressed given, which is not the principle of the proposed constitution.

SMILIE: The arguments which have been urged, Mr. President, have not in my opinion, satisfactorily shewn that a bill of rights would have been an improper, nay, that it is not a



necessary appendage to the proposed system. As it has been denied that Virginia possesses a bill of rights, I shall on that subject only observe, that Mr. Mason, a gentleman certainly of great information and integrity, has assured me that such a thing does exist, and I am persuaded, I shall be able to a future period to lay it before the convention. But, Sir, the state of Delaware has a bill of rights, and I believe one of the honorable members who now contests the necessity and propriety of that instrument, took a very conspicuous part in the formation of the Delaware government. It seems however that the members of the federal convention were themselves convinced, in some degree, of the expediency and propriety of a bill of rights, for we find them expressly declaring the writ of Habeas Corpus and the trial by jury in criminal cases shall not be suspended or infringed. How does this indeed agree with the maxim that whatever is not given is reserved? Does it not rather appear from the reservation of these two articles that every thing else, which is not specified is included in the powers delegated to the government? This, sir, must prove the necessity of a full and explicit declaration of rights; and when we further consider the extensive, the undefined powers vested in the administrators of this system, when we consider the system itself as a great political compact between the governors and the governed, a plain, strong, and accurate, criterion by which the people might at once determine when, and in what instance, their rights were violated, is a preliminary, without which this plan ought not to be adopted. So loosely, so inaccurately are the powers which are enumerated in this constitution defined, that it will be impossible, without a test of that kind, to ascertain the limits of authority, and to declare when government has degenerated into oppression. In that event the contest will arise between the people and the rulers: "You have exceeded the powers of your office, you have oppressed us," will be the language of the suffering citizens. The answer of the government will be short—"We have not exceeded our power:

you have no text by which you can prove it." Hence, Sir, it will be impracticable to stop the progress of tyranny, for there will be no check but the people, and their exertions must be futile and uncertain; since it will be difficult, indeed, to communicate to them, the violation that has been committed, and their proceedings will be neither systematical nor unanimous. It is said, however, that the difficulty of framing a bill of rights was insurmountable: but, Mr. President, I can not agree in this opinion. Our experience, and the numerous precedents before us, would have furnished a very sufficient guide. At present there is no security, even for the rights of conscience, and under the sweeping force of the sixth article, every principle of a bill of rights, every stipulation for the most sacred and invaluable privileges of man, are left to the mercy of government.

## *Federalist I: On the Purpose of the Writer*

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

To encourage public support for the Constitution, James Madison of Virginia and Alexander Hamilton and John Jay wrote a series of letters explaining the advantages of the Constitution and debunking criticisms of it. Collectively, the eighty-five essays became known as *The Federalist Papers*. They were initially published in a series of New York publications—*The Independent Journal*, *Packet and Daily Advertiser*—in 1787 and 1788. Hamilton wrote fifty-one essays, Madison fifteen, and Jay five. The balance were written by Hamilton or Madison or the two together. All of the articles were signed "Publius." The first article was published in *The Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787.

Although Hamilton had argued for a stronger executive than the Constitution allowed, he became one of the document's most forceful advocates. He was the only New York delegate to sign the Constitution while the other two state representatives refused to endorse the

proposal. New York's approval of the Constitution was critical to the success of the new nation. Although the Constitution was ratified by the required nine states by the time New York met to consider the Constitution, the failure of New York to participate would have literally split the new country in two and deprived it of a major commercial center. The *Federalist Papers* heavily influenced the state's decision to ratify the Constitution on July 26, 1788. In a larger sense, *The Federalist Papers* constituted an extraordinary articulation of the principles of self-government. Thomas Jefferson described them as "the best commentary on the principles of government which was ever written."

After an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting Federal Government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences, nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire, in many respects, the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis, at which we are arrived, may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act, may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

This idea will add the inducements of philanthropy to those of patriotism to heighten the solicitude, which all considerate and good men must feel for the event. Happy will it be if our choice should be decided by a judicious estimate of our true interests, unperplexed and unbiassed by considerations not connected with the public good. But this is a thing more

ardently to be wished, than seriously to be expected. The plan offered to our deliberations affects too many particular interests, innovates upon too many local institutions, not to involve in its discussion a variety of objects foreign to its merits, and of views, passions, and prejudices little favorable to the discovery of truth.

Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter, may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument, and consequence of the offices they hold under the State establishments—and the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandize themselves by the confusions of their country or will flatter themselves with fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies, than from its union under one government.

It is not, however, my design to dwell upon observations of this nature. I am well aware that it would be disingenuous to resolve indiscriminately the opposition of any set of men (merely because their situations might subject them to suspicion) into interested or ambitious views: Candor will oblige us to admit, that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and cannot be doubted that much of the opposition which has made its appearance, or may hereafter make its appearance, will spring from sources blameless at least, if not respectable; the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. So numerous, indeed, and so powerful are the causes which serve to give a false bias to the judgment, that we, upon many occasions, see wise and good men on the wrong as well as on the right side of questions of the first magnitude to society. This circumstance, if duly attended to, would furnish a lesson of moderation to those who are ever so much persuaded of their being in the right in any controversy. And a further reason for caution in this respect might be drawn from the reflection that we are not always sure that



creator; therefore, he must submit his will, in what concerns all, to the will of the whole society. What does he lose by this submission? The power of doing injuries to others—the dread of suffering injuries from them—and the commodities of mental or bodily weakness. What does he gain by it? The aid of those associated with him—protection against injuries from them or others—a capacity of enjoying his undelegated rights to the best advantage—a repeal of his fears—and tranquillity of mind—or, in other words, that perfect liberty better described in the Holy Scriptures, than any where else, in these expressions—“When every man shall sit under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make him afraid.”

The like submission, with a correspondent expansion and accommodation, must be made between states, for the like benefits in a confederation....

If, as some persons seem to think, a bill of rights is the best security of rights, the sovereignties of the several states have this best security, for they are not barely declared to be rights, but are taken into it as component parts for their perpetual preservation by themselves. In short, the government of each state is, and is to be, sovereign and supreme in all matters that relate to each state only. It is to be subordinate barely in those matters that relate to the whole; and it will be their own faults, if the several states suffer the federal sovereignty to interfere in things of their respective jurisdictions. An instance of such interference with regard to any single state will be a dangerous precedent as to all, and therefore will be guarded against by all, as the trustees or servants of the several states will not dare, if they retain their senses, so to violate the independent sovereignty of their respective states, that justly darling object of American affections, to which they are responsible, besides being endeared by all the charities of life.

The common sense of mankind agrees to the devolution of individual wills in society; and if it has not been as universally assented to

in confederation, the reasons are evident, and worthy of being retained in remembrance by Americans....

How beautifully and forcibly does the inspired Apostle Saint Paul, argue upon a sublimer subject, with a train of reasoning strictly applicable to the present? His words are—“If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? and if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” As plainly inferring, as could be done in that allegorical manner, the strongest censure of such partial discontents, especially, as his meaning is enforced by his description of the benefits of union in these expressions—“But, now they are many members, yet but one body; and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee again; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

### “There is no alternative”

#### GEORGE WASHINGTON

Like many of the signers of the Constitution, George Washington had mixed feelings about the particulars of the document. However, as this 1788 letter to the Marquis de Lafayette makes clear, Washington was willing to overlook the details for the sake of the most pressing issues. For Washington these were limiting the powers of government to as little as possible and dividing government into branches that would prevent the rise of any single individual or class. The alternative to the Constitution, he believed, was anarchy.

You appear to be, as might be expected from a real friend to this Country, anxiously concerned about its present political situation. So far as I am able I shall be happy in gratifying that friendly solicitude. As to my sentiments with respect to the merits of the new Constitution, I will disclose them without reserve (although by

passing through the Post offices they should become known to the world) for, in truth, I have nothing to conceal on that subject. It appears to me, then little short of a miracle, that the Delegates from so many different States (which States you know are also different from each other in their manners, circumstances and prejudices) should unite in forming a system of national Government, so little liable to well founded objections. Nor am I yet such an enthusiastic, partial or indiscriminating admirer of it, as not to perceive it is tinctured with some real (though not radical) defects. The limits of a letter would not suffer me to go fully into an examination of them; nor would the discussion be entertaining or profitable, I therefore forbear to touch upon it. With regard to the two great points (the pivots on which the whole machine must move) my Creed is simple:

1st—That the general Government is not invested with more Powers than are indispensably necessary to perform the functions of a good Government; and, consequently, that no objection ought to be made against the quantity of Power delegated to it:

2ly—That these Powers (as the appointment of all Rulers will forever arise from, and, at short stated intervals, recur to the free suffrage of the People) are so distributed among the legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches, into which the general Government is arranged, that it can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an Oligarchy, an Aristocracy, or any other despotic or oppressive form; so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the People.

I would not be understood my dear marquis to speak of consequences which may be produced, in the revolution of ages, by corruptions of morals, profligacy of manners, and listlessness for the preservation of the natural and unalienable rights of mankind; nor of the successful usurpations that may be established at such an unpropitious juncture, upon the ruins of liberty, however, providently guarded and

secured, as these are contingencies against which no human prudence can effectually provide. It will at least be a recommendation to the proposed Constitution that it is provided with more checks and barriers against the introduction of tyranny, & those of a nature less liable to be surmounted, than any government hitherto instituted among mortals, hath possessed. We are not to expect perfection in this world: but mankind, in modern times, have apparently made some progress in the science of Government. Should that which is now offered to the People of America, be found on experiment less perfect than it can be made—a Constitutional door is left open for its amelioration. Some respectable characters have wished that the States, after having pointed out whatever alterations and amendments may be judged necessary, would appoint another federal Convention to modify it upon those documents. For myself I have wondered that sensible men should not see the impracticability of the scheme. The members would go fortified with such Instructions that nothing but discordant ideas could prevail. Had I but slightly suspected (at the time when the late Convention was in session) that another Convention would not be likely to agree upon a better form of Government, I should now be confirmed in the fixed belief that they would not be able to agree upon any System whatever: So many, I may add, such contradictory, and, in my opinion, unfounded objections have been urged against the System in contemplation; many of which would operate equally against every efficient Government that might be proposed. I will only add, as a farther opinion founded on the maturest deliberation, that there is no alternative—no hope of alteration—no immediate resting place—between the adoption of this and a recurrence to an unqualified state of Anarchy, with all its deplorable consequences.



## "A wrong step now and the Republic will be lost forever"

PATRICK HENRY

The legendary revolutionary Patrick Henry was one of the staunchest opponents of the Constitution, which he feared would squash individual liberties. Saying he represented the voice of the people, he described his misgivings at the outset of the Virginia Constitutional Convention. Despite Henry's objections, which were widespread, Virginia ratified the Constitution on June 25, 1788.

Mr. Chairman. The public mind, as well as my own, is extremely uneasy at the proposed change of Government. Give me leave to form one of the number of those who wish to be thoroughly acquainted with the reasons of this perilous and uneasy situation—and why we are brought hither to decide on this great national question. I consider myself as the servant of the people of this Commonwealth, as a centinel over their rights, liberty, and happiness. I represent their feelings when I say, that they are exceedingly uneasy, being brought from that state of full security, which they enjoyed, to the present delusive appearance of things. A year ago the minds of our citizens were at perfect repose. Before the meeting of the late Federal Convention at Philadelphia, a general peace, and an universal tranquility prevailed in this country; but since that period they are exceedingly uneasy and disquieted. When I wished for an appointment to this Convention, my mind was extremely agitated for the situation of public affairs. I conceive the republic to be in extreme danger. If our situation be thus uneasy, whence has arisen this fearful jeopardy? It arises from this fatal system—it arises from a proposal to change our government: A proposal that goes to the utter annihilation of the most solemn engagements of the States. A proposal of

establishing 9 States into a confederacy, to the eventual exclusion of 4 States. It goes to the annihilation of those solemn treaties we have formed with foreign nations. The present circumstances of France—the good offices rendered us by that kingdom, require our most faithful and most punctual adherence to our treaty with her. We are in alliance with the Spaniards, the Dutch, the Prussians: Those treaties bound us as thirteen States, confederated together—Yet, here is a proposal to sever that confederacy. Is it possible that we shall abandon all our treaties and national engagements? And for what? I expected to have heard the reasons of an event so unexpected to my mind, and many others. Was our civil polity, or public justice, endangered or sapped? Was the real existence of the country threatened—or was this preceded by a mournful progression of events? This proposal of altering our Federal Government is of a most alarming nature: make the best of this new Government—say it is composed by any thing but inspiration—you ought to be extremely cautious, watchful, jealous of your liberty; for instead of securing your rights you may lose them forever. If a wrong step be now made, the republic may be lost forever. If this new government will not come up to the expectation of the people, and they should be disappointed—their liberty will be lost, and tyranny must and will arise. I repeat it again, and I beg Gentlemen to consider, that a wrong step made now will plunge us into misery, and our Republic will be lost. It will be necessary for the Convention to have a faithful historical detail of the facts, that preceded the session of the Federal Convention, and the reasons that actuated its members in proposing an entire alteration of Government—and to demonstrate the dangers that awaited us. If they were of such awful magnitude, as to warrant a proposal so extremely perilous as this, I must assert, that this Convention has an absolute right to a thorough discovery of every circumstance relative to this great event. And here I would make this enquiry of those worthy

characters who composed a part of the late Federal convention: I am sure they were fully impressed with the necessity of forming a great consolidated Government, instead of a confederation. That this is a consolidated government is demonstrably clear, and the danger of such a Government, is, to my mind very striking. I have the highest veneration for these Gentlemen, but, Sir, give me leave to demand, what right had they to say, We, the People. My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask, who authorised them to speak the language of, We, the People, instead of We, the States? States are the characteristics, and the soul of a confederation. If the States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated National Government of the people of all the States. I have the highest respect for those Gentlemen who formed the Convention, and were some of them not here, I would express some testimonial of my esteem for them. America had on a former occasion put the utmost confidence in them: A confidence which was well placed: And aim sure, Sir, I would give up any thing to them; I would cheerfully confide in them as my Representatives. But, Sir, on this great occasion, I would demand the cause of their conduct. Even from that illustrious man, who saved us by his valor, I would have a reason for his conduct—that liberty which he has given us by his valor, tells me to ask this reason, and sure I am, were he here, he would give us that reason: but there are other Gentlemen here, who can give us this information. The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear. It is not mere curiosity that actuates me—I wish to hear the real actual existing danger, which should lead us to take these so dangerous in my conception. Disorders have arisen in other parts of America, but here, Sir, no dangers; no insurrection or tumult, has happened—every thing has been calm and tranquil. But notwithstanding this, we are wandering on the great ocean of human affairs. I see no landmark

to guide us. We are running we know not whither. Difference in opinion has gone to a degree of inflammatory resentment in different parts of the country—which has been occasioned by this perilous innovation. The Federal Convention ought to have amended the old system—for this purpose they were solely delegated: The object of their mission extended to no other consideration. You must therefore forgive the solicitation of one unworthy member, to know what danger could have arisen under the present confederation, and what are the causes of this proposal to change our Government.

## *The Raising: A New Song for Federal Mechanics*

FRANCIS HOPKINSON

Francis Hopkinson published this Federalist song in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1788 to support and celebrate the Constitution. It captures the essential principles that the Federalists advocated—a firm federal government and free citizens—by comparing the founding of the new government to the construction of a strong house. The song represented the spirit with which the new country embarked upon becoming a new nation in a sometimes hostile world.

- i.  
Come muster, my Lads, your mechanical Tools,  
Your Saws and your Axes, your Hammers and Rules;  
Bring your Mallets and Planes, your Level and Line,  
And Plenty of Pins of American Pine;  
For our roof we will raise, and our Song still shall be—  
A government firm and our Citizens free.
- ii.  
Come, up with Plates, lay them firm on the Wall,